

Mayor Nathan Senn

Councilors

Johnnie L. Bolt
Sara C. Latimore
Marian C. Miller

Cassandra Campbell
S. Martin Lowry, Mayor Pro-Tem
Alicia Sullivan

Regular Council Meeting
126 East Public Square

AGENDA

January 19, 2021 – 5:30 PM

Call to Order – The Honorable Mayor Nathan Senn

Invocation: Councilor Sullivan

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of January 19, 2021 Agenda

Approval of December 15, 2020 Minutes

Opening remarks from Mayor Nathan Senn

I. **COUNCIL BUSINESS**

1. Justin Benfield, Regional Chief Operating Officer for Prisma Health – Upstate’s Southern region, updating COVID 19 and conditions at local hospital.
2. City Attorney Tom Thompson presenting second reading Ordinance 11-20-01 Rezoning Parcel 906-01-03-048 address 1520 West Main Street from B4 to R3.
3. City Attorney Tom Thompson presenting first reading Ordinance 11-20-02 Annexation of Parcels 325-00-00-014 and 354-00-00-022.
4. Gary Bailey of Love Bailey & Associates presenting 2019 -2020 Fiscal Year Audited Financials.
5. City Attorney Tom Thompson presenting first reading Ordinance 9-20-01 Parade, Event, Block Party, Performance, Filming and Picketing Regulation Ordinance.
6. Councilor Alicia Sullivan presenting Resolution 1-21-01 February as Local Black History Month.
7. Councilor Alicia Sullivan addressing council concerning additional line items to budget, work session to receive presentation for Council on roles and responsibilities, yearly review of Department Heads and Laurens City Cemetery.
8. Executive session to discuss acquisition of Real Estate.
9. Adjournment.

OPEN FORUM FOR PUBLIC INPUT – 15 MINUTES
EACH SPEAKER IS LIMITED TO 2 MINUTES
MUST SIGN IN TO ADDRESS COUNCIL BEFORE
THE MEETING IS CALLED TO ORDER

**CITY OF LAURENS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
126 EAST PUBLIC SQUARE
JANUARY 19, 2021
5:30PM**

PRESENT

Mayor Nathan Senn, Councilor Johnnie Bolt, Councilor Cassandra Campbell, Councilor Sara Latimore, Councilor Martin Lowry, Councilor Marian Miller, Councilor Alicia Sullivan
City Administrator Gary Coleman, and City Clerk Leslie Mattison

PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

Judith Brown – The Advertiser and Kelsey Woods - GoLaurens

THE MEDIA WAS NOTIFIED BY AN EMAILED AGENDA.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Mayor Senn called the meeting to order with Councilor Sullivan giving the invocation and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Bolt to approve the January 19, 2021 agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 15, 2020 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve the December 15, 2020 meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

OPENING REMARKS

The first City Council meeting of the City of Laurens was held on January 24, 1846 – so, tonight, we meet just five days shy of the anniversary of that first meeting 175 years ago.

I took a look at the ordinances which were passed 175 years ago to get an idea of what was on the minds of our predecessors as they considered what was necessary to grow the city, maintain order, and what should be required of its citizens.

Human nature has not changed, and many of the things that concerned them, we would easily recognize. There were fines for breaching the peace. Those operating certain businesses had to apply for retail licenses. There were laws against public nuisances.

There were also laws that we might not recognize quite as easily.

Any showman or juggler who put on any performance or produced any play was required to pay the town council a tax of \$10 per day.

No person was allowed to run a horse or mule in the streets – which, I suppose was sort of like a speed limit – and no person was allowed to drive a wagon or carriage on the sidewalk. Then again, since we don't allow cars to drive on the sidewalk, maybe some things haven't changed all that much.

But, in addition to these ordinances which might seem a bit foreign to us now, there are some ordinances that I believe may teach us some important lessons.

Any person occupying a dwelling house in town was required to keep – at all times – a water bucket to be used for a fire in any part of town, and the bucket had to be marked with the owner's name and the initials F. B. for "fire bucket."

All male citizens between the ages of 16 and 50 were required to work 20 days a year to perform work on the roads, market, public wells, and streets in the city. Anyone who didn't want to work could pay money to the town clerk, and if they didn't pay money for an exemption, they would be fined for each day they didn't show up to work.

Why are these ordinances important? Because it showed that our ancestors understood and put into law what they knew was true. We need each other. Our safety and security depends on the willingness of neighbors to look after their neighbors.

In 1846, our city's need to fight fire required us to buy water buckets and keep them in our houses. The need to maintain our public facilities and roads in good repair required every male citizen to work for the City 20 days each year. Nearly one month out of every year!

Now, our city's needs are different. As we will hear more about tonight from Mr. Justin Benfield, CEO of Laurens Hospital, we are facing a critical period in our war against COVID-19. But, in this case, we are not asking you to go out and buy a bucket and stand at the ready to help put out fires. We are certainly not asking that you devote nearly a month's hard labor to fix potholes. The sacrifice which is being asked of every citizen is not burdensome, nor is it an attempt to trample upon anyone's rights. We are asking that you voluntarily do the things that will help prevent the spread of infection:

Maintain good hygiene and wash your hands frequently.

Wear a mask whenever you are in public.

Avoid public gatherings of groups larger than ten people.

These things aren't hard. They're just common sense.

The members of the first City Council were the sons of the men who fought in the Revolution. In fact, Edward Hix, one of the members of council who actually lived in my own house, was a veteran of the War of 1812 and had fought the British himself. These folks knew about real tyranny. And they also knew that if this city was to grow and prosper, we couldn't approach our problems with an attitude of every man for himself. They knew that our challenges would require the unity and effort of all.

And that, my friends, has not changed.

As we begin our 175th year, marking the significance of this historic meeting of our council, I hope that our city and the greater community will make an effort to put divisions behind us. To put love of country and our neighbor above self-interest, realizing that it is ultimately in our own interest to care for others. Let us do all that we can to protect those who are most vulnerable, even if we don't feel particularly vulnerable ourselves. Let us do what we can to be there for our healthcare workers, because they have been there for us when we or our families needed them. Let us do what we can to prevent the spread of infection and encourage unity in our community, not because there is a law written by mankind that says we must, but because there is a higher law written on our hearts that tells us that it is simply the right thing to do.

I ask for the support of City Council in affirming with one strong, clear voice that we need the help of every citizen to do his or her own part.

And I hope that we will all work together tonight and throughout the coming year in a spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

JUSTIN BENFIELD, REGIONAL CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER FOR PRISMA HEALTH – LAURENS COUNTY HOSPITAL, UPDATE ON COVID-19 AND CONDITIONS AT LOCAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Benfield began by stating that on the heels of the holiday season, there has been a tremendous surge in the number of COVID-19 cases. The cases are 2.5 times greater this surge than the last and the surge inside the hospital is also greater. Being a part of a very large healthcare organization for the state of South Carolina like Prisma Health has been very beneficial for us as a rural community hospital. We are able to tackle this challenge with 25,000 other team members and resources. The COVID-19 unit, which is part of a state project, opened Monday, January 18th and there are 15 beds on the floor for Phase 1. The hospital is at 133% capacity. He goes on to say that Prisma is using the Pfizer version of the vaccine. They are currently in Phase 1B which allows people 70 and over to receive the vaccine. Mr. Benfield stressed that it is important to remember which vaccine was taken in the first round because the same brand must be used for the second round.

**CITY ATTORNEY TOM THOMPSON PRESENTING SECOND READING ORDINANCE 11-20-01
REZONING PARCEL 906-01-03-048 ADDRESS 1520 WEST MAIN STREET FROM B-4 TO R-3**

City Attorney Thompson began by reminding council that the Planning Commission received a request from the owner of this property, Chen Investments out of Miami, FL, to rezone it from B4 to R3. The property is west of Bi-Lo on West Main Street and consists of approximately ten acres. This is related to a residential subdivision plan in that area.

A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Sullivan to approve Ordinance 11-20-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

**CITY ATTORNEY TOM THOMPSON PRESENTING FIRST READING ORDINANCE 11-20-02
ANNEXATION OF PARCELS 325-00-00-014 AND 354-00-00-022**

This property consists of 126 acres and is also owned by Chen Investments. It is not too far behind Bilo and is adjacent to parcel 906-01-03-048 that was just rezoned from B4 to R3. This ordinance does two things...it will annex the 126 acre parcel and zone it as R3. City Attorney Thompson stated that it is his understanding that this property will be developed as a residential subdivision.

A motion was made by Councilor Bolt and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve Ordinance 11-20-02. The motion was approved unanimously.

GARY BAILEY OF LOVE BAILEY & ASSOCIATES PRESENTING 2019-2020 FISCAL YEAR AUDITED FINANCIALS

The FY 2020 audit occurred during the week of September 21st, 2020. It is Love Bailey Certified Public Accountant's opinion that the city's financial statements, the financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the City of Laurens are all in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. One of the major highlights of the audit is that the net position of the city decreased by \$350,806 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 to a balance of \$8,662,881. Furthermore, at the close of the fiscal year, the city's governmental funds reported an ending fund balance of \$4,620,279, an increase of \$449,046 from the prior year's fund balance. He continued by summarizing the specifics of the audit and by detailing the findings.

**CITY ATTORNEY TOM THOMPSON PRESENTING FIRST READING ORDINANCE 09-20-01
PARADE, EVENT, BLOCK PARTY, PERFORMANCE, FILMING, AND PICKETING REGULATION
ORDINANCE**

This ordinance was previously tabled during the September 2020 meeting. At that point, all councilors voiced concern about not having enough time to read and fully understand the ordinance. After much discussion, council agreed to table the vote on this ordinance once again and hold a special-called meeting to vote after they have time to review it. Mayor Senn explained to council that the need for this ordinance is urgent due to the events of last year. There were five different occasions where, because there was not a proper ordinance in place, the city was unable to deal with the situations and it put our law enforcement in dangerous positions.

A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Campbell to table Ordinance 09-20-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

COUNCILOR ALICIA SULLIVAN PRESENTING RESOLUTION 01-21-01 FEBRUARY AS LOCAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH, DISCUSSING ADDITIONAL LINE ITEMS TO BUDGET, WORK SESSION TO RECEIVE PRESENTATION FOR COUNCIL ON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, YEARLY REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT HEADS, AND LAURENS CITY CEMETERY

Councilor Sullivan stated that, as everyone knows, we have been working on establishing awareness for local black history. She wishes to present a resolution to council to designate February 2021 as local Black History Month. We will continue to bring awareness to the milestones and contributions that were made by African Americans in the City of Laurens. She continued by reading Resolution 01-21-01. Mayor Senn thanked Councilor Sullivan for her efforts in looking for positive ways we can work together to bring recognition to everyone who has contributed to our city and its history.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve Resolution 01-21-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

Councilor Sullivan continued by stating she has been on council for four years now. She has wanted to make proposals, but has never received a clear and concise understanding on how to do so. She asked council if they would be interested in having a presenter from the MASC to come in for a work session and explain roles and responsibilities of council. She had the council members that are interested to raise their hands and presented a letter that was sent to Jeff Shacker of the MASC to help with the presentation in February of 2021. Mayor Senn informed council that he has already spoken with both Councilor Sullivan and City Administrator Coleman about holding a work session with council and Mr. Shacker. He stated that from a procedural point of view, the item that is on the agenda addresses several items by way of discussion that council can receive as information. However, there is no document presented to council for them to consider or vote on. There is no action that can be taken by council at this point. If there is interest from members of council outside of the context of the meeting, we can get the work session scheduled. Mayor Senn wanted to ensure that council is following proper procedure. Councilor Sullivan inquired about a timeframe. Mayor Senn stated that, as previously discussed, it will be after the March council elections. She also stated the need for regular council work sessions so roles and responsibilities will be understood.

EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS ACQUISITION OF REAL ESTATE

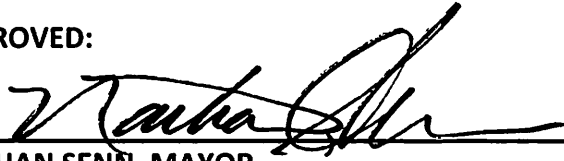
A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Sullivan to approve going into Executive Session. The motion was approved unanimously.

No action was taken.

ADJOURN

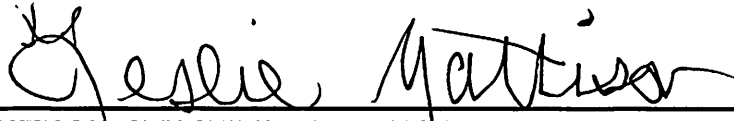
A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Bolt to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVED:



NATHAN SENN, MAYOR

ATTEST:



LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK AND TREASURER